[What is the logic error here?](http://groups.google.com/group/rtb_apologists/t/876b20d5ba4735f7)

**Lester Marr <**[**marred4life@gmail.com**](mailto:marred4life@gmail.com)**>** Feb 22 08:04PM -0800    
  
Regarding Hugh's probabilities of intelligent life existing, somebody   
would respond that probabilities are irrelevant. For instance:  
   
What is the chance that a person in the audience sitting in seat 12D, has   
red hair, is wearing a grey shirt, nike runners size 9, took a bus to get   
here, whose parents came from Boston, whose is married to a woman who wears   
glasses, ... and so on. We could list a thousand parameters and come up   
with a extremely low probability similar to Hugh's.  
   
What is the logic error here?

**Boyle Timothy <**[**za3t-byl@asahi-net.or.jp**](mailto:za3t-byl@asahi-net.or.jp)**>** Feb 22 09:42PM -0800    
  
That is similar to what one atheist said to me about extremely unlikely things happening all the time, but when you think about it, those are all after the fact. Any event that you can observe will have all sorts of characteristics that you could list up and assign probabilities based on statistics of the characteristics in question. But that is different that having all of these parameters characterized ahead of time and seeing whether that would happen. When it comes to life, you could say it's "after the fact," but that's in a far different sense. All of those characteristics have to be that way in order for life to be possible. When it comes to the "person in the audience sitting in seat 12D" etc., you first have to have the theater in existence in order for that to be possible, and that doesn't happen by itself. I suppose you could call it a category error, though I'm not sure if that's the best term in this case.  
   
Tim Boyle

**"John Millam" <**[**john@semichem.com**](mailto:john@semichem.com)**>** Feb 22 11:49PM -0600    
  
Lester,  
   
The fallacy of the argument presented is that the choice of things to  
include in the probability calculation is arbitrary and meaningless. Those  
things are not chosen to correspond to something, so the probability is  
ambiguous and ill-defined. Consider an analogous probability calculation.  
You go to work and see someone that day with a particular combination of  
suit, shirt, shoes, hat, etc. If that person has a large wardrobe, then  
that particular combination would have a small probability, yet you saw the  
person wearing exactly that. So, it surely can't be that improbable if it  
happened. Such a line of reasoning is obviously silly, since that  
particular combination is arbitrary because it doesn't correspond to  
anything. Any number of things can be added to the correlation because it  
is purely arbitrary. Now, let us change the scenario. You go to work and  
see the person with that particular combination and you see a second person  
with an identical wardrobe wearing the same combination as the first person.  
The probability of that is significant because there is a correspondence (is  
person A wearing the same outfit as person B). That is well-defined and  
likely highly improbable. In the original ill-defined scenario, someone  
could add an arbitrary number of clothing items to the test, but you can't  
do that in the revised scenario (because you can only include those items  
that the two have in common).  
   
  
   
Hugh's probability calculation is a meaningful argument because it is  
corresponds to something real. Take for example, the factor of the planet's  
distance from its parent star. I think that everyone can see that in our  
own solar system that that distance does have clear implications for  
habitability. As such, the particular attack on Hugh's calculation that you  
ask about is clearly fallacious. There are some legitimate challenges, such  
as arguing that the individual probabilities are too narrow or that life can  
exist in a much broader range of conditions than assumed in Hugh's  
calculations. If they wish to argue in that direction, then at least you  
can have a meaningful dialog.  
   
  
   
John Millam  
   
9816 W 51st Terr  
   
Merriam, KS 66203  
   
(h) (913) 236-8434  
   
(o) (913) 268-3271  
   
[john@semichem.com](mailto:john@semichem.com)  
   
  
From: [rtb\_apologists@googlegroups.com](mailto:rtb_apologists@googlegroups.com)  
[[mailto:rtb\_apologists@googlegroups.com](mailto:rtb_apologists@googlegroups.com?)] On Behalf Of Lester Marr  
Sent: Friday, February 22, 2013 10:05 PM  
To: [rtb\_apologists@googlegroups.com](mailto:rtb_apologists@googlegroups.com)  
Subject: What is the logic error here?  
   
  
   
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**Lester Marr <**[**marred4life@gmail.com**](mailto:marred4life@gmail.com)**>** Feb 22 10:24PM -0800    
  
Thanks John,  
   
That's another tool I can store in my box, ready for use when then time   
comes.  
   
Lester

**Jack Chapin <**[**jchapin@sem-architects.com**](mailto:jchapin@sem-architects.com)**>** Feb 23 06:41AM -0500    
  
Great questions and conversation here. This has been and still is in many  
ways a challenge to me too. The skeptic's argument looks like some kind of  
category error, because there are differing kinds of systems. The other  
evening, I had a opportunity to present (part of) the RTB Testable Creation  
model to a group of 10 gentlemen who were of differing world views. Atheist  
(evolutionist), Agnostic (evolutionist), Deist (evolutionist), Theistic  
Evolutionist, Christian (ID), etc. They were really WAY too interested in  
spouting off their own world views Š so instead of waiting for the talk to  
be completed (since it was their meeting), Q&A began about 20 minutes into  
the presentation and they would not let it move back to the new information  
I was bringing to the table. Š. Š.. That is not unusual. It is not that they  
fear new info. It is the cognitive dissonance they feel as a competing  
worldview with credibility comes onto the horizon.  
   
They almost cant't wait to challenge what is challenging them Š Š. I could  
watch the gears start turning behind their eyes. As that happened, their  
ears shut down and they had great difficulty listening to and taking in new  
information. Ad Hominem remarks like "that can't be true" or "you are going  
to have to let go of that one" went around the table. :-)  
   
At one place, when evolution under random processes, survival of the fittest  
and natural selection was being discussed by one gentleman, I mentioned Dr.  
Ross' mathematical calculation of it takes to get advancement of a living  
organism through random mutation. (a quadrillion individuals in the  
population, 2cm body length, 3 months until mature enough to reproduce  
including gestation time (generation time) ) Š. One very intelligent guy  
just couldn't get his mind around the idea of a mental experiment where the  
number of trials was being proposed by me to allow the testing of his  
concept Š because the picture painted was SO remote. In his mind .. I must  
have an error, because the results showed impossibility. His reasoning was  
that if the numbers showed advancement to be wrong Š then there must be  
something wrong with the testing method or with the numbers Š because  
advancement OBVIOUSLY happens :-)  
   
With the present logic problem Š we have a difficult time setting up the  
thought experiment. In the everyday world of probabilities, we can check to  
see the possibility of a ball reaching a numbered slot. We can check to see  
if a coin is heads or tails. We can check to see the outcome of a particular  
results of rolled six sided die Š or 10 sided die. The results are  
predictably different.  
   
I'm an architect and checking for design and whether it is good is part of  
my everyday thinking for most of my life Š ever since I can remember  
actually. However, to test if design is present is even easier than the  
thought experiment of Dr. Ross' that I proposed to the guy Š Š. yet is more  
difficult because of the emotions that result. Architects can't even agree  
if design is good Š because of emotions Š. Š Is a design good because it is  
functional, or is it good because it looks pretty although function is  
compromised? (the difference between "Modernisn" and " Postmodernism" in  
architectural design) Š Š.Design could be determined to be present if  
information is present, because we don't see information being created,  
preserved or added to systems in real time, unless some source of  
intelligent intervenes. Design could also be seen to being present if  
information or predetermined purpose is imparted or transferred within a  
system Š reading a book, moving a truck up a hill against gravity by means  
of an engine Š. an aqueduct system for directing water to a remote location  
Š the sizing of a steel beam for a bridge being determined in advance by a  
structural engineerŠ etc.  
   
Another difficulty is that in pure probabilities, we think that the test  
mechanism can either be naturally produced (a "random" rock hitting your car  
windshield or not). What we forget is that in the issue of life like man Š  
the seemingly (to the atheist) "random" processes aren't random. Š. I'll  
explain Š  
   
How do I explain to an atheist that there is actually design intrinsic in  
the laws of physics? The fact that gravity exists as a concept and reality  
in our universe is not random. Then there is the property of the strength of  
gravity which could be random Š but not really when we considered that  
chances of life existing if Gravity force is altered Š Š Instead it begins  
to look purposed.  
   
Jonathan Wells in the book "Icons of Evolution" says that irreducible  
complexity of a molecular machine may seem improbable Š but there was also a  
machine that made that machine with its own set of assembly instructions Š Š  
and one to create the components of the previous one Š and the one previous  
Š and the one previous Š Š "It is irreducible complexity all the way down".  
   
When I realize that the structural engineer who designed the steel beam for  
the bridge relied upon the strength of the structural properties of the  
steel, the mass of the steel, the predictable strength of gravity on a  
planet of a specific mass Š and its predictable pull on the bridge  
components and the vehicles which will cross the bridge Š and start looking  
at the laws that must be in place to accomplish the task of designing the  
beam Š. and those laws must be what they are to ALSO have life as we know it  
Š. It is difficult to know where the design begins and ends. Š Š Š. It  
becomes interesting that life can exist in a world where that specific beam  
and bridge design can also exist.  
   
I could say Š sure the bridge is designed, but gravity being designed to  
produce life is random Š Š gravity could be many strengths and still allow  
the bridge. The bridge could be there without the need to simultaneously be  
designed for life. Design in one realm (bridge)does not necessarily show  
design in another (life). The design inference isn't that we look at two  
designs and assume that one proves the other Š Š it is that we use one  
design to help us define what the act of designing, result of designing and  
the presence or absence of a designer looks like Š so we can infer if  
something is designed and therefore infer if a designer exists in two  
partially related systems.  
   
With Jonathan Wells' insight (or inference) Š "it looks like design all the  
way down".  
   
That is where the categories of logic become important. If we consider that  
to the theist, it all looks designed Š Š Š. yet to the atheist "design is  
circular reasoning" Š the discussion with my friends the other night is  
where the rubber hits the road. There are even rules within a completely  
designed system where probabilities become remote and the hand of a designer  
or intelligence become more pronounced. We can start with the obvious like  
the origin of information in living systems, because that is the obvious and  
easy stuff where we see the information that implies the DesignerŠ Š But we  
can't forget that the laws of physics and chemistry etc must eventually be  
considered part of the design too. As we advance our arguments Š the  
underlying system that the universe rides on is important. Just as a  
computer program has information and design backed by intelligence. The  
universe "rides" on a program of Laws. We have length, width, height, time,  
matter, energy, planets, stars, life, you, me Š all riding on a system of  
physical laws that are themselves the system that defines and allows what  
is.  
   
I guess that is why I think the topic at had shows some form of category  
error by the skeptic. It is not the usual .. But maybe it is a form that  
will be defined in the discipline of logic as we allow the field of ID to  
impinge upon it.  
   
Eventually it is that we live in a universe where the 2nd Law of  
Thermodynamics reigns (a part of the design) Š Yet order and even  
information are being added to the system through information driven systems  
that show intervention of an Intelligence and would not be what one would  
predict as the outcome of unguided processes in a 2nd law world.  
   
It is the fingerprint of God to the Christian Š to the skeptic who has  
Scarlet O'Hare's philosophy Š an unexplained mystery that they will get to  
"tomorrow".  
   
So the person can sit in the chair in the theater and it can be the result  
of probability Š or of choice of an intelligence who didn't want to be too  
close to the screen, or nearer the back, because of the way the surround  
sound worked in the theater Š or because of the pretty girl sitting in the  
second row Š or because he decided that it wasn't wise to sit next to her  
and he should be prudent and sit next to his wife in the back row so they  
could keep their eye on their teen age son who was on his first "date" with  
friends in the middle of the auditorium Š or Š or Š or Š :-) Š Š. Geee Š is  
that something sticky I just sat in? I should have looked before I sat down  
Š maybe THAT is why this was the last open seat in the movie theater Š  
   
Just thoughts Š doing most of my movies at home on the BluRay,  
   
Jack  
Columbus/Westerville, Ohio  
=========================  
  
From: John Millam <[john@semichem.com](mailto:john@semichem.com)>  
Reply-To: RTB Apologists <[rtb\_apologists@googlegroups.com](mailto:rtb_apologists@googlegroups.com)>  
Date: Saturday, February 23, 2013 12:49 AM  
To: RTB Apologists <[rtb\_apologists@googlegroups.com](mailto:rtb_apologists@googlegroups.com)>  
Subject: RE: What is the logic error here?  
   
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**Roger JAY <**[**rjay1941@sbcglobal.net**](mailto:rjay1941@sbcglobal.net)**>** Feb 23 06:30AM -0800    
  
Jack, William Dembski does a good job of discussing these ideas in his writings (The Design Inference, Intelligent Design, The Design Revolution). When the complexity is specified by a pattern, that makes all the difference.   
Roger  
   
--- On Sat, 2/23/13, Jack Chapin <[jchapin@sem-architects.com](mailto:jchapin@sem-architects.com)> wrote:  
   
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Subject: Re: What is the logic error here?  
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With the present logic problem … we have a difficult time setting up the thought experiment. In the everyday world of probabilities, we can check to see the possibility of a ball reaching a numbered slot. We can check to see if a coin is heads or tails. We can check to see the outcome of a particular results of rolled six sided die … or 10 sided die. The results are predictably different.  
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reading a book, moving a truck up a hill against gravity by means of an engine …. an aqueduct system for directing water to a remote location … the sizing of a steel beam for a bridge being determined in advance by a structural engineer… etc.  
Another difficulty is that in pure probabilities, we think that the test mechanism can either be naturally produced (a "random" rock hitting your car windshield or not). What we forget is that in the issue of life like man … the seemingly (to the atheist) "random" processes aren't random. …. I'll explain …  
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Jonathan Wells in the book "Icons of Evolution" says that irreducible complexity of a molecular machine may seem improbable … but there was also a machine that made that machine with its own set of assembly instructions … … and one to create the components of the previous one … and the one previous … and the one previous … … "It is irreducible complexity all the way down".  
When I realize that the structural engineer who designed the steel beam for the bridge relied upon the strength of the structural properties of the steel, the mass of the steel, the predictable strength of gravity on a planet of a specific mass … and its predictable pull on the bridge components and the vehicles which will cross the bridge … and start looking at the laws that must be in place to accomplish the task of designing the beam …. and those laws must be what they are to ALSO have life as we know it …. It is difficult to know where the design begins and ends. … … …. It becomes interesting that life can exist in a world where that specific beam and bridge design can also exist.  
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Eventually it is that we live in a universe where the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics reigns (a part of the design) … Yet order and even information are being added to the system through information driven systems that show intervention of an Intelligence and would not be what one would predict as the outcome of unguided processes in a 2nd law world.  
It is the fingerprint of God to the Christian … to the skeptic who has Scarlet O'Hare's philosophy … an unexplained mystery that they will get to "tomorrow".  
So the person can sit in the chair in the theater and it can be the result of probability … or of choice of an intelligence who didn't want to be too close to the screen, or nearer the back, because of the way the surround sound worked in the theater … or because of the pretty girl sitting in the second row … or because he decided that it wasn't wise to sit next to her and he should be prudent and sit next to his wife in the back row so they could keep their eye on their teen age son who was on his first "date" with friends in the middle of the auditorium … or … or … or … :-) … …. Geee … is that something sticky I just sat in? I should have looked before I sat down … maybe THAT is why this was the last open seat in the movie theater …  
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JackColumbus/Westerville, Ohio=========================  
   
   
   
   
From: John Millam <[john@semichem.com](mailto:john@semichem.com)>  
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person with an identical wardrobe wearing the same combination as the first person.  The probability of that is significant because there is a correspondence (is person A wearing the same outfit as person B).  That is well-defined and likely highly improbable.  In the original ill-defined scenario, someone could add an arbitrary number of clothing items to the test, but you can’t do that in the revised scenario (because you can only include those items that the two have in common).  Hugh’s probability calculation is a meaningful argument because it is corresponds to something real.  Take for example, the factor of the planet’s distance from its parent star.  I think that everyone can see that in our own solar system that that distance does have clear implications for habitability.  As such, the particular attack on Hugh’s calculation that you ask about is clearly fallacious.  There are some legitimate challenges, such as arguing that the  
individual probabilities are too narrow or that life can exist in a much broader range of conditions than assumed in Hugh’s calculations.  If they wish to argue in that direction, then at least you can have a meaningful dialog.  John Millam9816 W 51st TerrMerriam, KS 66203(h) (913) 236-8434(o) (913)[268-3271john@semichem.com](mailto:268-3271john@semichem.com)  From: [rtb\_apologists@googlegroups.com](mailto:rtb_apologists@googlegroups.com) [[mailto:rtb\_apologists@googlegroups.com](mailto:rtb_apologists@googlegroups.com?)] On Behalf Of Lester Marr  
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What is the logic error here? --  

**Richard Gerhardt <**[**sagescience.rick@gmail.com**](mailto:sagescience.rick@gmail.com)**>** Feb 23 06:41AM -0800    
  
Yes. Roger is right. The pattern (in this case, life support) is meaningful  
independent of (or prior to) the data. The person's characteristics and  
clothing (in the offered counter example) do not meet this criterion.  
Rick  
Central Oregon (but currently in Philly)

**Tom Salamone <**[**tsalamonertb@gmail.com**](mailto:tsalamonertb@gmail.com)**>** Feb 23 09:52AM -0500    
  
The correct lottery example is set up this way; you have a lottery of a billion billion black ping pong balls, each representing a life prohibiting universe. then you insert a single white ping pong ball representing a life permitting universe and shuffle the lottery and make a selection. Now any ball drawn is equally improbable, but it would be overwhelmingly more probable that a life prohibiting ball (black) is drawn than life permitting (white). so we could only rationally conclude that if indeed a white ping pong ball is drawn that the lottery was rigged, that it was designed or purposed to be life permitting.  
   
The example given of the lady in seat 12D is bogus, in that it isn't an example of a lottery at all. Rather, all it does is copy characteristics after the fact and then apply them to that very person in seat 12 D, and determine that it is therefore improbable that the person in seat 12D exists. it would be like observing the universe as being life permitting and saying that because all these characteristics exist, therefore we shouldn't be surprised about it because after all, here we are.   
   
the firing squad analogy is better, for you wouldn't say I shouldn't be surprised that I'm still alive after they shoot at me because here i am. Rather you would say that they must have all missed on purpose.  
   
Tom  
   
Sent from my iPad

**Rod Nave <**[**rodnave@gsu.edu**](mailto:rodnave@gsu.edu)**>** Feb 23 12:12PM -0500    
  
This has been a great discussion. At some point you should include the Richard Feynman license plate version.  
   
"You know, the most amazing thing happened to me tonight. I was coming here, on the way to the lecture, and I came in through the parking lot. And you won't believe what happened. I saw a car with the license plate ARW 357. Can you imagine? Of all the millions of license plates in the state, what was the chance that I would see that particular one tonight? Amazing!"  
   
On Feb 23, 2013, at 9:52 AM, Tom Salamone wrote: